

A worthy past, a bright future

Superintendent Dave Heroian used today's knowledge and products to revive the charm of the historic golf course at the 103-year-old Myopia Hunt Club.

Dave Heroian has conflicting priorities as golf course superintendent of Myopia Hunt Club in South Hamilton, MA: bring the technology he uses on his 103-year-old course into the 21st century while taking the character of the course back to the 19th century.

"When I arrived at this course 11 years ago the roughs were mowed down to 1 ½ inches and highly maintained," says Hero-

ian, who graduated from the University of Massachusetts Turf School and holds a four-year degree in recreation management. "But a true links-style course doesn't have maintained roughs. The course also had added quite a few trees, which were not in keeping with the old-style look. The keys to a links-style course are wide open spaces with a lot of mounding, bunkering and tall roughs."

So Heroian set to work removing trees



A former farmhouse, the club house for the Myopia Hunt Club is 225 years old. The Club itself is 103 years old, with a links-style golf course, five polo fields, and fox hunting grounds. (Photo credit: Arthur Cicconi)

and replacing them with mounds and bunkers. At the same time he stopped mowing roughs and let the fescues grow naturally. He and his crew also restored 25 bunkers to their original sizes and depths. They dug through the different layers of sand until they hit soil, which defined the shape and size of the initial bunker. In addition, they looked at old pictures and talked to the older members before making changes to the bunkers.

Taft's Bunker

"President William Taft was a member here in the late teens and early 20s, and one of the bunkers is named after him," says Heroian. "The story goes that every time he played the course, the crew made this particular bunker deeper. Well, Taft weighed more than 300 pounds and eventually they had to tie a rope around him to pull him out. We redid the bunker in 1992, taking it down to six feet deep. It's right in front of the green

and when you're in the bunker, all you can see is the pin and flag. We now have stairs leading golfers from the bunker to the green."

With 104 bunkers, most of them very steep, the Myopia course requires intensive hand labor. Bunkers are hand-raked and hand-mowed, and tee banks are all hand mowed. Heroian installed a new automatic irrigation system in 1989, but his crew still hand waters areas of the fairways and greens to minimize moisture in summer months. By cutting back on water, Heroian helps his bentgrass "beat out" the *Poa annua*.

"When I came here, fairways were mostly ryegrass and annual bluegrass—or

Poa annua," recalls Heroian, who was superintendent at New York's Rockland Country Club before coming to Myopia. "We overseeded with ryegrass for the first few years but then went to strictly bentgrass. Ever since we had the new irrigation system installed seven years ago we've been on an intense overseeding program to increase bentgrass populations.

"We started at 20-30 percent bentgrass, and at this point we have between 60-80 percent bentgrass."

For the past four years Heroian has



View from the second tee at the Myopia Hunt Club. The course's 104 bunkers are all hand raked and hand mowed.

used Progress herbicide as part of his bentgrass overseeding program. Each year he and his 14-member crew aerate and seed fairways in August, then come in with two fall applications of the herbicide. They apply the product at the rate of one-half gallon per acre in mid October and again in mid November.

Reducing Poa

"Each year we have less and less *Poa* and more and more bentgrass," says Heroian. "We cut back on water in late spring and early summer, too, letting fairways wilt a little bit. *Poa* doesn't like to be droughted out like that, so we get a jump on it before the season starts. We started picking up

clippings about the same time we began using Progress. All of these practices work together to reduce *Poa annua* populations."

Neither has Heroian experienced much of a problem with other weeds. While he previously made a preemergence herbicide application each spring for crabgrass control, he now uses just a postemergence herbicide on certain fairways. Other fairways receive no weed control treatment at all.

On fairways with areas of crabgrass infestations, he makes one application of Acclaim herbicide in early June, returning with a second treatment two weeks later.

In addition to the golf course, Heroian oversees a separate four-person crew which maintains the Myopia Hunt Club's five polo fields. Basically, the fields require only mowing and divoting. But the crew takes extra care grooming them for the East Coast Open, an interna-

tional polo tournament the club hosts each summer. This crew also helps with the riding stables and dog kennels, where hounds are housed all year for the fall fox hunts.

"People often feel like they've been dropped off in another country when they visit here," says Heroian. "We're definitely an old-style club and the membership wants to keep it that way. With the changes we've made in the course, bunkers now come into play like they did in the old days. At the same time, we've added some tees and increased the length of the course by 150 yards. Members seem to be happy with the mix of the old-style and the newer trends in golf." □